United Nations A/ES-10/PV.35

General Assembly

Emergency Special Session

Official Records

35th meeting
Friday, 16 January 2009, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann ..... (Nicaragua)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before proceeding further, I should like to inform members that, since the publication of document A/ES-10/438, Afghanistan has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations. May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of that information?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): That information will be reflected in document A/ES-10/438/Add.1, to be issued at a later date.

Agenda item 5 (*continued*)

Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Draft resolution (A/ES-10/L.21)

Mr. Nsengimana (Rwanda): I have the honour to deliver the following statement on behalf of the African Group. Allow me at the outset to thank you, Mr. President, for reconvening the tenth emergency special session, on illegal Israeli actions in the occupied Palestinian territory, in particular the Gaza Strip. The African Group appreciates the high level of priority that you have devoted to this issue and to the continued suffering of the Palestinian people.

We are 21 days into the present conflict in the Gaza Strip — which has claimed close to 1,000 lives and resulted in over 4,000 injuries — and still we see little, if any, sign of abatement. The already fragile humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip has deteriorated dramatically since Israel began its military offensive, with innocent civilians, in particular women and children, bearing the brunt of the suffering. The African Group strongly condemns the loss of life on both sides and urges an immediate cessation of hostilities.

The African Group notes with regret that, eight days since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), scant progress has been realized in its implementation. The African Group urges the General Assembly to ensure that Council resolution 1860 (2009) — which, among other important provisions, calls for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire and the unimpeded provision and distribution throughout Gaza of humanitarian assistance, including food, fuel and medical treatment — is implemented without further delay or preconditions.

We urge Israel to comply fully with the Security Council's resolution, to cease its massive attacks against the civilian population in the Gaza Strip and to respect the provisions of international humanitarian law by lifting the siege and ending the wanton destruction of life and property. We call upon both parties to cease all military activities and to pursue the path of lasting peace, guided by current diplomatic efforts, including the Egyptian initiative.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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The African Group welcomes the ongoing efforts by the Secretary-General and other members of the international community that have mobilized to ensure that a lasting solution to the present conflict is arrived at. The African Group wishes to pay special tribute to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and all other organizations that are actively engaged in alleviating the plight of the citizens of Gaza under the most difficult of conditions. It is imperative that the international community remain actively seized of the situation in the Gaza Strip.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that the African Group will continue to support all initiatives aimed at achieving a two-State solution for the two peoples. The fighting has gone on for too long. The suffering of the people has to stop.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): I would like to begin by expressing the United Kingdom's support for the statement made by the Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic in the name of the European Union.

The United Kingdom welcomes the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), which my delegation drafted and sponsored last week. Resolution 1860 (2009) is very clear in its call for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire. That requires an urgent halt to Hamas rocket attacks and an end to Israeli military operations. We look to the parties to implement those steps without delay.

We welcome the ongoing Egyptian efforts to deliver that ceasefire on the ground. Their work is vital and we hope it succeeds. Every day that goes by without a ceasefire sees the death of more Palestinian civilians, including children, and the continued threat to Israeli civilians from rocket attacks. We cannot afford another week of this tragic conflict, so let us have a ceasefire immediately.

Making such a ceasefire durable will be a real challenge, but one to which the parties and the international community need to rise. There has to be practical action to improve security and halt the illegal traffic of arms and their components into Gaza. In parallel, we must reopen border crossings in Gaza to allow the movement of people and goods. We welcome the progress that appears to be under way to achieve those goals.

However, the humanitarian situation in Gaza remains desperate. The United Nations continues to do an outstanding job there under very difficult circumstances. We applaud the courageous work of the staff of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, in particular given the impossible position they are put in by the military activity of Hamas and the damage being done by Israeli shelling. We condemn the fact that United Nations headquarters in Gaza was yesterday hit by Israeli shelling.

The United Kingdom has made available an additional $10 million to help address urgent humanitarian needs. We will continue to support the United Nations and other international agencies that have the infrastructure and expertise to lead the humanitarian response. However, only a permanent ceasefire and the opening of border crossings can deliver sustained progress.

While we would not seek to limit freedom of debate in this room and in the General Assembly, we are engaged in negotiations to try to deliver a draft General Assembly resolution that will command widespread support across the membership. We nevertheless feel obliged to underline the limits that Article 12 of the United Nations Charter places on action that can be taken in the General Assembly on matters on which the Security Council is exercising its functions.

The Security Council's work on the situation in Gaza is clearly ongoing. The adoption of resolution 1860 (2009), a week ago, has been followed by further discussion in the Council. We were briefed by the Secretary-General ahead of his current visit to the region and were able to give him further guidance at that time.

The Council met again yesterday to receive a further briefing on the situation following the attack on United Nations facilities, after which the Council President spoke to the press on the Security Council's behalf. The Security Council remains seized of the matter and is ready to consider what further action is necessary in the light of the Secretary-General's findings upon his return. It cannot be doubted that the exercise by the Security Council of its functions is ongoing.

Above all, we should take care to ensure that the General Assembly acts in support of the provisions of

Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), which provides the right, agreed framework for our collective action. Once again, I call on all parties to implement that resolution urgently.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): We thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting on this very important issue, which requires urgent attention by all of us. Japan shares the serious concern about the situation in and around the Gaza Strip. We deplore the heavy casualties — now reaching more than 1,000 — which include more than 300 children and 70 women, according to reports by Mr. John Holmes.

As stated in Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), we condemn all violence and hostilities directed against civilians and all acts of terrorism. As a staunch supporter of the activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) on behalf of the Palestinian people, we believe that what happened at the UNRWA facility yesterday was not acceptable.

There has been extensive damage to public infrastructure, which is having an adverse impact on this dire situation. That may affect the population in the long term. We call for an effective ceasefire. For a ceasefire to be effective, it must be immediate, durable and fully respected.

In that regard, we fully support Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), which was adopted with the broadest possible political support last week. Japan fully supports the elements set out in the resolution and will work together with other members of the international community to implement them. As a member of the Security Council, Japan, united with all other Council members, will ensure that this issue remains under the closest possible review and a top priority, not just until there is a ceasefire, but until true peace is achieved in the region.

We applaud many diplomatic initiatives, in particular those undertaken by Egypt. Japanese Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone expressed to Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt, Japan's appreciation for the diplomatic efforts under way to bring about a ceasefire. We also lend our wholehearted support to the Secretary-General himself, who is currently in the region and, as we speak, is working tirelessly on our behalf to bring an end to the violence. We look forward to the Secretary-General's report regarding the trip upon his return. Ambassador Tatsuo Arima, the Government of Japan's Special Envoy for the Middle East, is now meeting with political leaders of Egypt, Israel and the Palestinian Authority to urge all parties to achieve an immediate ceasefire. We very much hope that those diplomatic efforts will bear fruit as soon as possible.

Japan deeply sympathizes with the innocent civilians who are suffering in Gaza. The people there require immediate humanitarian assistance. Japan has announced emergency assistance of $10 million, of which $3 million will immediately be provided through UNRWA.

All necessary humanitarian and economic aid should be allowed to go through the crossings unhindered. The crossings into Gaza need to be reopened under legitimate control so that necessary supplies can reach the population in need and medical treatment can be provided to the injured.

We believe that it is of paramount importance that the solution to the problem come from the parties concerned, with support from all of us, both regionally and internationally — not the other way around. Japan, for its part, will continue to play a constructive role to help the parties in their efforts to achieve peace.

In closing, I would like to reaffirm Japan's commitment to the principles set out in Security Council resolutions 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009). A lasting peace will be achieved only through an enduring commitment to mutual recognition; freedom from violence, incitement and terror; and the two-State solution, building upon previous agreements and obligations. We sincerely hope that the political process will soon be on track once again with a view to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): For three weeks, the Gaza Strip has seen a bloody rampage as a result of a large-scale operation of retaliation launched by the occupying Power with the disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force. It is having a grave impact on the civilian population, which has been deliberately targeted. Benin is very aware of the suffering of the victims of this unprecedented crisis.

The right of peoples to self-determination is an inalienable right. The same applies to every State's right to exercise legitimate self-defence in strict compliance with international humanitarian law, international law and human rights. The current

situation in Gaza is totally at odds with those rules and with the basic principles of humanity. The statistics speak for themselves: approximately 1,000 dead and 5,000 wounded in such a short period of time. No cause can justify or make acceptable such human losses, the intolerable attacks perpetrated against United Nations relief facilities and the apparent use of weapons prohibited by the international community against defenceless civilians, who are trapped by extremists on all sides. Benin vigorously condemns all those violations of international humanitarian law. We call on the United Nations to carry out the investigations necessary to objectively identify those responsible.

Benin strongly urges all countries that have an influence on the situation in the Middle East to do everything legally within their power to put an end to the violence against the Palestinian people. In that regard, Benin calls for scrupulous compliance with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), adopted on 8 January 2009. It calls for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire, a withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and the unimpeded provision and distribution throughout Gaza of humanitarian assistance.

After such a serious crisis, the international community has the imperative duty to ensure the establishment of a basis for lasting peace in the region so that this situation can never recur. In the absence of cooperation from the parties, the Security Council should use all the means at its disposal to finally put an end to this asymmetric conflict. It has lasted too long and has now taken a turn that threatens a people that the international community is obliged to protect.

Finally, Benin therefore supports the ongoing efforts to find a diplomatic solution to the crisis, in particular the Franco-Egyptian plan and the objectives of the Secretary-General's visit to the region. We urge all relevant actors to tirelessly continue the negotiations to ensure that dialogue and compromise prevail.

The elements of the final settlement of the Palestinian question are known to us all. The solution must fulfil the legitimate aspirations of all parties concerned — Israelis and Palestinians. They each have a legitimate right to live in their own State.

Benin believes that what was set out at the Annapolis conference should be implemented to bring into effect the vision of two States living side by side in peace within borders that have been defined as a result of direct negotiations between the parties and internationally recognized and guaranteed.

Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We call upon all Palestinian factions to work to overcome their differences and to restore a united front under the legitimate Palestinian Authority, because division weakens the Palestinian cause as a whole while making a negotiated settlement of the conflict less likely.

We urge all parties involved in some way to do everything to restart and maintain the peace process and bring about the reconciliation of the peoples of Israel and Palestine. The priority should be to put an end to the bloodshed and create the conditions for eliminating all sources of tension in the Middle East. We are all aware of the destabilizing influence that the situation of the Palestinian people has on international relations in the region.

The Security Council should deal with this situation in an effective and rigorous manner by using all the measures that it has at its disposal to ensure the effective implementation of its resolutions. We must put an end to the spiral of violence and give peace a chance.

My delegation supports the draft resolution to be adopted at the closing of this tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Ould Hadrami (Mauritania) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me, at the outset, to extend my thanks to the President for convening this emergency special session of the General Assembly dedicated to the illegal Israeli actions in East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory, in particular the current situation in the Gaza Strip. We also extend our thanks to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his tireless efforts to find a solution for the current situation.

I wish to align myself with the statements made by the representative of the Kingdom of Morocco on behalf of the Group of Arab States, by the representative of Uganda on behalf of the members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the members of the

Non-Aligned Movement, and by the representative of Rwanda on behalf of the Group of African States.

I would like to express the deep concern and pain felt by the leadership and people of Mauritania in connection with the brutal aggression that the fraternal Palestinian people are being subjected to, which has led to heavy casualties and severe damage to property. Israel is waging war on the Gaza Strip by air, sea and land, and despite the calls of all peoples of the world, human rights organizations and international relief agencies, it has continued its aggression. Unfortunately, all of those calls have fallen on deaf ears in Israel, and undoubtedly this war will encourage the spread of a culture of violence and retaliation in a world where people hope to live and coexist in peace.

This emergency special session of the General Assembly comes at a time when the Israeli aggression on Gaza has entered its third week and has led to the deaths of more than 1,000 people, in addition to the thousands of wounded, including women and children. This tragic situation is catastrophic, involving an unarmed and besieged civilian population that has to endure the brutality of a sinful military machine.

The Palestinian people are in immediate and dire need today of an international legitimacy that would protect them and provide them with a decent, dignified life in a place where they can live in peace and security, and not in an environment of heinous aggression in which even mosques, schools and United Nations facilities are targeted. Indeed, when a United Nations warehouse was violently hit by an Israeli attack, food and medical supplies were destroyed in the resulting fire.

Such places should enjoy international immunity and security in order to limit negative impacts. The international community represented in the United Nations should immediately move to put an end to the bloodshed that is taking place in the Gaza Strip. That could only happen with the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009), which provides for an immediate and durable ceasefire leading to the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and the opening of all border crossings so as to allow unimpeded provision and distribution of food, fuel and medical assistance to the people of Gaza. We therefore urge the General Assembly to work immediately towards implementing resolution 1860 (2009). After an immediate ceasefire is reached, we call for an emergency special meeting of the donor countries for help in the reconstruction of Gaza.

The President returned to the Chair.

Out of its concern about the situation and its obligation under the Charter of the United Nations, Mauritania calls from this rostrum on the international community to work towards protecting the Palestinian people and respecting their national and humanitarian rights. This war has no winner, as has been confirmed many times. The solution cannot be a military one; it has to be based on negotiations.

We believe that the best way to achieve peace is for Israel to implement all relevant United Nations resolutions and to respond to the Arab Peace Initiative, which is based on the principle of land for peace, and to all the other good initiatives that, in total, aim to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace as well as a permanent solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict in which the creation of an independent Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital and coexisting in peace and security with the State of Israel, is secured.

In conclusion, I would like to confirm that, despite our limited means and resources in Mauritania, we have supplied aid to our brothers and sisters in the Gaza Strip, in the form of eight trucks full of foodstuffs, medicine and baby formula, so that their suffering may be alleviated.

Mr. Tiendrébéogo (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, my delegation would like to thank you for agreeing to convene this emergency special session to allow all States Members of the United Nations to speak on the grave crisis that has been affecting the Middle East for three weeks now.

Burkina Faso would like to reiterate its serious concern over the continuing escalation of violence in Gaza, as it has done in the Security Council since the outbreak of these hostilities. In those cases, Burkina Faso has always expressed its firm condemnation of the use of force by both parties, including the disproportionate and indiscriminate nature of the Israeli attacks. Today, the toll is very heavy. However, while we deplore the deaths on the Israeli side, it must be recognized that it is the civilian population in Gaza that is paying the heavier price in this war.

My delegation wishes to say that, whatever the motivations behind them, the violations of human rights and humanitarian law at the levels we are now

seeing are unacceptable because they are unjustifiable. That is why we condemn them, particularly because many of the victims are women and children held hostage by a situation for which they are not responsible.

We condemn the targeting of schools, hospitals, media offices and, only yesterday, United Nations facilities, which, in this situation of general chaos, serve as temporary shelters for the civilian population. In no case can that serve the cause of any victory, much less peace.

For all those reasons, we urge the parties to fully shoulder their responsibilities, including full and unconditional compliance with the relevant international conventions, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention, relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

In human and moral terms, no one can remain indifferent either to the catastrophe in Gaza, where the humanitarian situation was already alarming as a result of the blockade, or to the rocket attacks against Israel. That is why Burkina Faso, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, voted in favour of resolution 1860 (2009). We were convinced that, despite its shortcomings, its weaknesses and the fact that it was late in coming, the resolution enabled the Security Council to join those throughout the world who have expressed their concerns, calling for an immediate ceasefire and an urgent and appropriate humanitarian response. Unfortunately and very regrettably, the parties immediately rejected the resolution and have continued to fight ceaselessly.

The situation remains urgent. Thus, no effort should be spared in ensuring that resolution 1860 (2009) is effectively implemented. In that connection, we commend and support all ongoing diplomatic initiatives to end the current violence and find a just, lasting and comprehensive political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We are particularly grateful to Egypt for its tireless efforts, which we hope will swiftly bear fruit. The Secretary-General also deserves our unconditional support. Since the beginning of the crisis, he has consistently called for reason and responsibility on the part of Israel and Hamas and for international solidarity with the civilian population.

Achieving a ceasefire is one thing; ensuring that it is durable is quite another. In that respect, the idea of setting up an international mechanism to monitor the ceasefire and compliance with other provisions of Council resolution 1860 (2009) should be studied very closely. In addition, we must, as soon as possible, mobilize all those of goodwill with a view to the reconstruction and economic rehabilitation of devastated Gaza.

As for the future, Burkina Faso has always supported the solution of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. All efforts must lead towards that goal, which, we are convinced, will guarantee a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the conflict.

Mr. Park In-kook (Republic of Korea): The Republic of Korea is deeply concerned over the continued violence, casualties and suffering of civilians in and around Gaza. My delegation deplores the ongoing hostilities and would like to express its sincere condolences to the families of the victims.

We are deeply disturbed by the loss of civilian life at the United Nations school in Jabaliya. In particular, we are profoundly disturbed that the compound of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Gaza has been shelled, which resulted in many casualties and destroyed a considerable amount of aid. We join the Secretary-General in expressing shock and outrage.

My delegation believes that the international community should make every effort to help ensure the cessation of the ongoing violence. Once again, I call on all parties to the conflict to implement a ceasefire and, in particular, to secure unimpeded humanitarian access to the civilian population in Gaza.

The Republic of Korea fully supports the international efforts to bring an end to this tragic situation. In that regard, I welcome the adoption, on 8 January, of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), calling for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire in Gaza. My delegation calls on all parties to implement the resolution, thus achieving an immediate ceasefire, allowing the passage of humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians and halting the trafficking of arms and ammunition into the territory.

My delegation fully supports the ongoing diplomatic efforts of Egypt, France and others to bring the two sides together to agree on a lasting ceasefire, to work for reconciliation and to resume regional peace

initiatives. My delegation is deeply grateful to the Secretary-General for his efforts, which are helpful in bringing an end to the conflict and dealing with the serious humanitarian situation on the ground. I encourage all parties to redouble their efforts so that the current visit of the Secretary-General to the Middle East will lead to a ceasefire and meaningful negotiations.

The people in Gaza require immediate humanitarian aid. Food, medical supplies and fuel must be delivered to Gaza. Mindful of the urgent humanitarian situation, the Republic of Korea has provided emergency humanitarian assistance for the people of Gaza.

The Republic of Korea has grave concerns regarding the negative implications that the current round of fighting will have for the long-term prospects for peace and stability in the region. My delegation believes that only a negotiated political solution can be mutually acceptable to all parties to the conflict. It must result in the establishment of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in peace and security.

The Republic of Korea has been a resolute and consistent supporter of the Middle East peace process. My delegation believes that the peace process between Israel and Palestine is of critical importance to the peace and stability of the region and of the world as a whole. We join the rest of the international community in calling on all parties to take their differences to the negotiating table for a peaceful resolution of the conflict, working to ensure a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Soler Torrijos (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, Mr. President, my delegation wishes to express its support for your decision to resume this emergency special session.

The international community must focus on a situation that continues to deteriorate every day. The situation on the ground in Gaza is grave and requires this forum to act and issue recommendations in that respect. On previous occasions, Panama has expressed its profound concern with regard to the situation of the people of Gaza. It has condemned the failure to respect the ceasefire and appealed to Israel and Hamas to lay down their arms immediately and unconditionally, take the steps necessary to avoid civilian casualties, and allow the unimpeded delivery of medical and humanitarian assistance.

Panama has also strongly condemned the attacks by Hamas on Israeli civilians and recognized Israel's right to defend itself. Panama has also stressed, however, that that right is not unconditional. Force must be used in accordance with the principles of proportionality and necessity. The sporadic launching of rockets against civilians, however grave, does not justify the ongoing destruction of infrastructure or the killing of innumerable Palestinian civilians. The Charter of the United Nations and international law impose limits on the right to self-defence, and Israel cannot ignore borders, impose sovereignty or violate the norms of international humanitarian law. In that regard, my delegation believes that the Secretary-General's call for an independent investigation on compliance with international humanitarian law in Gaza during the current conflict is indeed timely.

Panama recognizes the efforts that have been made by various regional actors, in particular Egypt, the League of Arab States and others in Europe and Latin America, to find a solution to the crisis. Only a renewed ceasefire can open the way to establishing the minimal conditions acceptable to the people of Gaza. Only the pursuit of political negotiations between the Palestinian factions and between Israel and a Palestinian Authority that can speak on behalf of all Palestinians will lead to a lasting solution to the problem.

Despite the many efforts that have been made, the Security Council, which bears the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, is not fully meeting its obligations. The Council recently adopted resolution 1860 (2009), but it has yet to be implemented. Everyone is aware that certain members of the Council that support one party to the conflict or another do so unconditionally and fail to pay due attention to the specific activities or decisions being undertaken. As a result, it would appear that there is no will or ability within the Council to promote an understanding that will facilitate a political solution. Given that inability on the part of the Council, peace initiatives appear and disappear without any particular impact.

Panama calls on the Council and its members to assume their Charter responsibility to make a genuine

effort to understand the conflict's causes and, above all, its effects at the international level and to advocate and implement solutions that will lead to peace.

Mr. Mitchell (Grenada): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Caribbean Community.

The States members of the Caribbean Community would like to take this opportunity to first thank you, Sir, for reconvening this emergency special session of the General Assembly. We welcome this opportunity to offer our views, as part of the wider membership of the United Nations, on the dire situation in Gaza. We are happy that history will not record a silent General Assembly as human suffering escalates in Gaza as others fail to take effective action.

We draw attention to the statement issued by the ministers of foreign affairs of the Caribbean Community, which was issued on 9 January and has been circulated to Member States.

We in the Caribbean Community express grave concern over the attacks on Gaza and southern Israel, and we equally deplore the attendant loss of life, including that of non-combatants, especially innocent women and children. We deplore, too, the widespread destruction of essential property and infrastructure, most especially people's homes.

The Caribbean Community condemns unequivocally the deliberate attacks on United Nations personnel, convoys and facilities. We join with the Secretary-General in strongly denouncing these seemingly deliberate and repeated attacks.

The Caribbean Community reiterates the call made by the international community for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire, as stated in Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). We are appalled by the blatant disregard of this legitimate demand by the international community. The United Nations should not condone such appalling conduct by any of its Member States, whereby the wishes of the Organization are flaunted without any consequence. That is why, Mr. President, the Caribbean Community supports your specific call for an immediate ceasefire and immediate humanitarian access. We envision, once compliance on these two actions has been attained, that the General Assembly will begin to meet its obligation under the United Nations Charter to promote peace and to end human suffering.

Throughout this conflict, we have witnessed utter disregard for the dignity and sanctity of human life, as well as the wanton killing and maiming of innocent civilians, particularly women and children. Indeed, subjecting the whole Palestinian people to collective punishment is unacceptable to us.

We support every effort being undertaken by the Secretary-General, the Arab League, States and other international organizations. There is no doubt that peace is deeply desired by the long-suffering but brave people of the Middle East region. Hence, the States members of the Caribbean Community firmly urge all parties and stakeholders to spare no effort to bring the peace process back on track. We call on the parties to adopt and adhere to meaningful benchmarks that will resolve all outstanding issues. Let there be a clear timeline for achieving lasting and durable peace between the parties, to the ultimate benefit of all concerned.

The economic and humanitarian embargo imposed on the people of Gaza must be lifted with immediate effect and measures must be instituted to allow the unhindered flow of relief supplies, humanitarian personnel and other humanitarian aid to the civilian population. The Caribbean Community calls for strict observance of the principles of international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Convention. Every effort should be made to uphold their integrity. We call on the parties to fully respect their obligation in this regard.

The economic life of the people of Gaza must not be jeopardized. The day-to-day life-supporting activities of the Palestinian people, which ensure basic human well-being and survival, must never be threatened, for to do so violates the fundamental human rights principles of right to life and to dignity.

It is in the spirit of the protection of peoples' human rights that the Caribbean Community wishes to see unfettered access given to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations in order to enable them to carry out the legitimate humanitarian work that is so desperately needed to alleviate the plight of the population in Gaza. Equally, the right to safety and protection for the people of Gaza and the people of southern Israel must be guaranteed.

Finally, in adhering to diplomacy as the language of dispute settlement, we the States members of the Caribbean Community stand ready to play our part in finding a just and lasting solution to the international quest for durable peace between Israel and Palestine, and in the wider Middle East. We do not believe that there can be a military solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; therefore, we call on all parties to return to the negotiating table. Indeed, new momentum must be generated by all concerned. The attainment of peace in the region must start with the immediate cessation of hostilities in the ongoing conflict, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security within internationally recognized borders.

Once again we thank you, Mr. President, for the strong and exemplary leadership, compassion and fortitude which you have demonstrated throughout this tragic humanitarian crisis. This is exemplified by your courage, as you search, through this dialogue, for immediate but meaningful solutions.

Mr. Toihiri (Comoros) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to thank you Mr. President, for having reconvened this emergency special session. We are not surprised at that action as we are familiar with your commitment to just causes and to the defence of the weak against the massively powerful, of law against lawlessness and of justice against injustice. My delegation endorses the statements made by the representatives of Morocco on behalf of the Arab Group, Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, Uganda on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and Rwanda on behalf of the African Group.

Faithful to its position, Comoros supports the Palestinian cause in its just and legitimate struggle. I will be brief because everything that must be said has already been said. But everything that must be done has not yet been done regarding the situation in Gaza.

We therefore ask how much longer the international community will accept the unacceptable, pardon the unpardonable, excuse the inexcusable and find excuses for this enormous horror while witnessing the massacre of innocents: massacres of babies, children and women — yes, one third of the victims of this slaughter have been children. How much longer will the international community stand by, powerless against the daily horror of the massacre to which the civilian population is falling victim? How can one of the strongest armies in the world bask in the glorification of its strength when it faces an unarmed civilian population? How much longer will the international community stand by powerless in the face of the bombing of what is most neutral and most sacred, including newspaper offices, hospitals, schools, United Nations buildings and places of worship? How much longer will we accept the use of a brutal disproportionate war machine and the use of phosphorous bombs against a civilian population making up the majority of the victims? How much longer will our conscience continue to be tortured as we witness the daily violation by Israel of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War? How much longer will we accept a country's continued scorn for the resolutions of the international community?

We believe that enough is enough. The depths of horror have been reached. Therefore, we the Comoros call for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), an immediate ceasefire, the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza, the lifting of the blockade on the territory, which is the main cause of the crisis, the opening of the crossing points and the establishment of an international commission of inquiry on the violations of international law in Gaza and of international humanitarian law. The international community must make major efforts to contribute to the rapid reconstruction of Gaza.

Finally, we pay tribute to those countries that are committed to bringing assistance to the martyred Palestinian people, and we commend the efforts being made by the Secretary-General, as well as by Egypt, to find a just solution to this conflict that has lasted much too long.

Ms. Parviainen (Finland): Finland fully aligns itself with the European Union statement delivered earlier by the representative of the Czech Republic.

I join my colleagues in their calls for an immediate and sustainable ceasefire that is fully respected by both parties. It is paramount that rocket fire into Israeli cities stops and Israeli troops withdraw from Gaza, leading to a normal opening of the crossings into Gaza and normalization of life for all citizens. Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) should be implemented fully and in all its aspects without any further delay.

We must ensure quick and safe delivery of humanitarian aid to the population of Gaza. We wish to reiterate that facilitating humanitarian operations is an obligation for all parties to conflict under international humanitarian law. The suffering of civilians, particularly children, is intolerable. Finland therefore condemns Israel's shelling of the headquarters of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in Gaza. This has further aggravated the already dire humanitarian situation of the civilians in Gaza. To assist UNRWA in carrying out its vital tasks, Finland is currently preparing its contribution for the Agency.

After a ceasefire has been reached, our goal should be stepping up the peace process as called for by Council resolution 1850 (2008). In that regard, encouraging intra-Palestinian reconciliation is of the greatest importance.

Finally, there is no military solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The solution must be based on the process set out in Annapolis, leading to a viable Palestinian State existing side by side with Israel in peace and security. We support all efforts to reach a permanent ceasefire in the area.

Mr. Terzi di Sant'Agata (Italy): I would like first of all to align myself with the statement delivered earlier by the Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the presidency of the European Union.

My Government was one of the first to request an immediate and workable ceasefire, through repeated public statements, diplomatic activity and clear positions expressed in the Security Council during the very last days of Italy's term as a non-permanent member of the Council.

My country is deeply concerned by the extremely serious humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. The dramatic rise in civilian victims in unacceptable. The innocent civilian population is paying too high a price for a policy of intolerance and hatred. We also stress the need to guarantee, in all circumstances, respect for the inviolability of schools, hospitals and United Nations premises. In the same way, we affirm that those safe havens for civilians must never be used for military goals.

The continued engagement of the Security Council, especially through the adoption of resolution 1860 (2009), is an important and positive aspect. All parties should quickly heed the Council's appeal for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire. There is no military solution to the crisis, and the peace process sanctioned by the Annapolis conference is irreversible, as affirmed in Security Council resolution 1850 (2008).

My Government's contribution to initiatives aimed at helping the Palestinian people of the Gaza Strip in these dire humanitarian conditions has been immediate. Italy has allocated an emergency contribution of €3 million to United Nations agencies and to the Palestinian Red Crescent. My Government has also coordinated the aid coming from civil society and the local Italian authorities, thus raising additional contributions, which will be quickly channelled to the Strip.

Egypt's commitment to facilitate a solution, particularly the plan proposed by President Mubarak, should be actively supported and encouraged. Parties should also be encouraged to engage in innovative solutions that could lead as quickly as possible to an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire.

International efforts to find a solution to the crisis and to restart the negotiation process should be based on the active role of the Quartet and the commitment of the European Union, and must be continued and reinforced also on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative, which offers a solid and appropriate basis for progress. The Secretary-General's mission to the region and his efforts to put an end to the hostilities are particularly welcome. We also commend his continued personal engagement to promote a lasting solution to the Middle Eastern conflict, including through his participation in and contribution to the Quartet activities.

My country would like to confirm its willingness to make all possible efforts in the European Union framework to the reopening of the Rafah crossing and to the re-establishment of the European Border Assistance Mission, to whose creation Italy made a significant contribution in 2005.

In conclusion, the goal of this meeting should be to put the entire weight of the United Nations behind ongoing diplomatic efforts to find a solution to this situation, and in particular to support Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), consistent with its provision for a clear road map to arrive at the prompt result we are seeking.

Mr. Moraes Cabral (Portugal): I would like to add some comments in my national capacity to the statement delivered by the representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

It is with the deepest concern that we continue to follow the violence, human rights violations and civilian deaths, including those of women and children, and the worsening humanitarian situation in and around Gaza. We join our voice to others in the international community calling for an immediate ceasefire and for the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from Gaza, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

Portugal deeply regrets the acts of violence that have caused such a high number of civilian casualties. We condemn both the rocket attacks by Hamas and the Israeli military operation. Both must cease immediately.

We invite all parties to do everything in their power to enable the alleviation of the current tragic humanitarian situation. To this end, we encourage Israel to create the necessary security conditions to allow for the effective distribution of humanitarian assistance, including medical treatment, to the affected population. We also urge the parties to fully respect their obligations under international humanitarian law.

In view of the seriousness of the humanitarian crisis, Portugal decided to make an extraordinary contribution of $100,000 to the emergency appeal launched by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

There is no military solution to the conflict in the Middle East. Portugal, along with its European Union partners, continues to support ongoing diplomatic initiatives aimed at stopping the current crisis. Portugal underlines the risks of radicalization emerging from the continuing hostilities, with dire consequences, not only in that region, but also in other parts of the world. The continuation of the present situation will only reinforce extremism, to the detriment of moderation and dialogue.

We appeal to all parties to return to the principles and objectives of Annapolis in order to achieve a lasting peace in the Middle East, based on a two-State solution with the establishment of an independent, viable and democratic Palestinian State, living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): Mr. President, we commend your decision to reconvene the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly. Certainly, what we are facing now in Gaza is an emergency of serious magnitude. Afghanistan and the Afghan people share Gaza's pain, and we stand in solidarity with those dying, suffering and mourning in Palestine.

It has been three weeks since Israel launched its air and missile attacks in Gaza, but the violence has only continued to escalate. The fighting has been terrible in its ferocity, particularly towards innocent civilians. So far, over 1,000 Palestinians have lost their lives; around 400 of them were children. An additional 5,000 people have been injured, many seriously — again, women and children are in the majority. Israel has, in fact, systematically disregarded human rights throughout the conflict, in violation of international humanitarian and human rights law.

Despite these terrible casualties, humanitarian aid has been denied: supplies are not permitted to enter and humanitarian workers are at constant risk of attack. Safe zones and civilian areas such as schools, mosques and hospitals have been directly targeted. We join all Member States in condemning the Israeli attack on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) compound yesterday, which demonstrated a fundamental lack of regard for the international obligations that bind Israel as a Member of the United Nations. We commend the extraordinary efforts and dedication of United Nations agencies and staff under such deplorable conditions.

The impossibility of providing assistance has pushed an already severe humanitarian crisis to the limit. United Nations agencies report that basic necessities such as food, water and cooking gas are becoming increasingly difficult to find. The terrified population of over 40,000 internally displaced persons is not permitted to leave and is unable to find refuge.

But the current casualties do not even tell the full story. The ramifications of the fighting in Gaza are far-reaching. Each additional day of violence means more desperation; the prospects for moderation, reconciliation and peace are fading.

For all those reasons, the situation in Gaza demands our immediate dedication. Common human decency demands no less.

Afghanistan stands with the Security Council in condemning all violence directed against civilians and in calling for the instantaneous implementation of Council resolution 1860 (2009) and an immediate, fully respected ceasefire leading to the full withdrawal of Israel from the Gaza Strip and a durable negotiated peace. In addition, humanitarian assistance and aid agencies must be allowed to reach those in need.

Any resolution of this crisis must respect and abide by international human rights and humanitarian law. The Fourth Geneva Convention, to which Israel is a party, requires that civilians be protected during conflict, and Israel, as an occupying force, must respect its duties towards the civilian population of Gaza.

Afghanistan stands with other Member States in agreeing that a durable solution must be one in which two States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders. That is the only way to address the security concerns of all parties and allow peaceful coexistence.

Once a ceasefire is achieved, the effort to achieve a durable solution will require the efforts of all of us, especially the regional countries directly impacted by the conflict. We appreciate and commend the tireless efforts of Egypt and the League of Arab States to successfully mediate and push forward negotiations. In addition, the Palestinian Authority under President Abbas should have a central role in any process. The solution, like the problem, will need to include regional actors and international partners.

We offer our full support to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and call for all parties to cooperate fully with him as he works to stop the tragedy unfolding before us. We join his call for a unilateral declaration of ceasefire by Israel to put an immediate end to the violence.

Today we can wait no longer; we must all act — and swiftly. Until a ceasefire is declared, there will be no end to the suffering of the people of Gaza. Once a ceasefire is declared, we must ensure that we have the political will to create a lasting and peaceful two-State solution.

Mr. Yáñez-Barnuevo (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain fully associates itself with the statement delivered yesterday by the representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

The Spanish Government has been categorical in its condemnation of the spiral of violence and destruction in Gaza that has been responsible for more than a thousand deaths, mostly among the Palestinian civilian population, as well as countless injured. The Spanish Government would like once again to reiterate before the Assembly its most fervent repudiation of both the irresponsible actions that provoked the breakdown of the truce and the reaction that ensued, which has been disproportionate and contrary to international humanitarian law. Both have only served to once again plunge the region and its peoples into hopelessness and frustration.

We must reaffirm the undeniable principle that a civilian population cannot be held hostage to political conflicts. There is no military solution to the crisis in Gaza, and, based on our deep friendship with the people of Israel, we have unequivocally said so to the Government. The Spanish Government well understands that security is vital to Israel and its citizens, as it is for any society and State. However, trying to achieve security essentially through the force of arms and without concern for the tremendous and irreparable harm to the civilian population is a dead end.

The Spanish Government has closely followed developments since this crisis erupted, on 27 December, while fully exercising Spain's capacity as an interlocutor in the region by maintaining ongoing contacts with the parties and the main regional and international protagonists. The Spanish Government's attention has focused first and foremost on the humanitarian aspect of the crisis. We have made a significant effort to deliver humanitarian assistance to Gaza, in line with the appeals by the Palestinian Government and humanitarian agencies. The first assistance arrived on 29 December. Special packages have been approved since then: €5 million earmarked for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and €1.5 million for the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Society. We have also sent two flights carrying humanitarian assistance.

In that connection, I would like to pay tribute to international humanitarian workers, in particular those of the United Nations, especially following yesterday's new and more serious bombing of the UNRWA compound in Gaza. The Spanish Government shares the outrage of the Secretary-General and the entire Organization and supports his call for an explanation from the Israeli Government.

Following the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) on 8 January, the Spanish Government has redoubled its efforts in support of its implementation and specifically of the Egyptian peace initiative, as well as the other ongoing regional and international efforts, including those of the European Union, with a view to securing the urgent implementation of the Council's resolution, in particular the establishment of an immediate and lasting ceasefire that is fully respected by all the parties and leads to the Israeli army's full withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

To that end, on 8 January the President of the Spanish Government received in Madrid Palestinian President Abbas, who also met with the King of Spain, Juan Carlos I. In addition, Minister for Foreign Affairs Moratinos has just completed a tour of the region, which took place from 12 to 14 January and allowed him to meet with many Egyptian, Syrian, Israeli and Palestinian officials and with the Secretary-General, who was also in the region. Moreover, the close ties that Spain has maintained with Turkey, which have grown since the joint launching of the Alliance of Civilizations initiative, are turning out to be very valuable in making an efficient contribution to international efforts to achieve an immediate ceasefire in line with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

Despite the tragic events of recent days, the Spanish Government is reasonably convinced that the international efforts under way will soon be able to yield positive results. We should therefore begin to think about the opportunity to set up an international mechanism for coordination and oversight of a ceasefire, based on arrangements agreed by the parties. In any case, the Spanish Government would like to take this opportunity to announce Spain's readiness to participate in such an international mechanism, which should have the support of the United Nations. In addition, we should work hard to bring about intra-Palestinian reconciliation under the authority of President Abbas.

Spain has on many occasions demonstrated its deep commitment to peace in the Middle East. The Spanish Government fully believes that the only solution to the current crisis is to resume a dialogue that leads to a peace agreement, which is essential to averting a new conflict in the Gaza Strip and in the region beyond. The Government of Spain will work tirelessly to that end, while taking advantage of its close ties with all the parties and the main regional and international protagonists and working with all of them in a coordinated way.

Spain fully believes in the important role of the General Assembly in finding a way out of the crisis in Gaza and supporting the efforts of the Security Council and the Secretary-General to achieve an immediate and lasting ceasefire in line with Council resolution 1860 (2009). In that regard, Spain would be prepared to support a statement by the Assembly on the crisis in Gaza, so long as it is in line with the goals to which I have referred and has wide support from general membership.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): We are coming to the end of this meeting. I should like to remind speakers to try to shorten their interventions if at all possible, on the understanding that the full text of their statements will be distributed to the membership. It is important that we take action on the draft resolution as soon as possible.

Ms. Štiglic (Slovenia): Slovenia fully aligns itself with the statement delivered yesterday by the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union and would like to make some additional comments in its national capacity.

Slovenia welcomes the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and calls on the parties to the conflict to immediately cease all acts of violence and respect their obligations under the resolution and the applicable international humanitarian and human rights laws. We strongly condemn attacks on schools and hospitals and on personnel and facilities of the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross, including the shelling of United Nations premises in the Gaza Strip yesterday.

We are deeply concerned regarding the humanitarian situation in Gaza, where the suffering and

anguish of the civilian population have escalated dramatically over the past days. The Slovenian Government has therefore decided to allocate additional humanitarian assistance to the population of Gaza. It is of utmost importance that humanitarian aid reaches the people of Gaza without hindrance. We welcome the decision taken by Israeli authorities to extend the cessation of attacks so that humanitarian assistance can be delivered unimpeded. Humanitarian personnel must be guaranteed free and secure movement and access. Security and administrative arrangements must be clearly established and predictable, without any preconditions.

The wounded and the seriously ill for whom medical assistance cannot be provided in Gaza must be evacuated. The most fragile population groups — women and especially children — need protection. They live with shortages of basically everything except violence. However, it goes without saying that an efficient humanitarian response is possible only if a ceasefire is in place and all crossings are open.

In conclusion, we call on both sides to cease fire immediately. The parties must restrain from any actions that would further threaten the viability of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this context, we strongly support Egypt in its ongoing efforts to achieve a comprehensive and durable ceasefire and the activities of the Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, in the region.

Mr. Kavanagh (Ireland): At the outset, I wish to associate myself with the remarks made yesterday by the Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland, Mr. Micheál Martin, T.D., warmly welcomed the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1860 (2009) calling for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire, stating:

> "It is extremely important that the United Nations Security Council, as the body tasked with the maintenance of international peace and security, has now acted and asserted its wish to see an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire implemented in Gaza".

Regrettably, however, the tragic events of recent weeks have been further compounded by the protagonists' failure until now to respond to the will of the international community, as so clearly expressed in resolution 1860 (2009). We urge both Israel and Hamas to respond immediately to the Council's call and to cease all hostilities in Gaza or directed against people in southern Israel. The appalling humanitarian situation now prevailing on the ground in Gaza demands no less.

We commend the other diplomatic initiatives under way, particularly those undertaken by the Governments of Egypt and France and others, aimed at ending the violence and ensuring a sustainable ceasefire. Ireland particularly welcomes the leadership that the Secretary-General has provided throughout the crisis and again at this critical juncture through his current mission to the region.

Our Minister for Foreign Affairs has also made clear Ireland's grave concern at the actions of the Israeli military, which have now twice compelled the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to suspend its operations in Gaza. Ireland deplores the loss of life among United Nations and other relief workers in Gaza. We would remind all sides to the conflict in Gaza of their obligations to comply fully with international humanitarian law, including as regards facilitating humanitarian operations and not impeding those brave and heroic humanitarian workers seeking to assist the injured and dying. It is also important that incidents such as the shelling of United Nations facilities in Gaza and the killing of medical and ambulance personnel during the performance of their duties be fully investigated by the international community.

Speaking yesterday in the region, the Secretary-General rightly pointed out that it is intolerable that the civilian populations in Gaza and in southern Israel bear the brunt of this conflict. The civilian population of Gaza have suffered to an appalling degree. Their welfare, through the urgent and unimpeded provision of all necessary humanitarian supplies and an end to the violence, must be the priority now in ensuring that the ceasefire provided for in resolution 1860 (2009) is put in place as speedily as possible. My Government has announced an initial emergency contribution of €500,000 as an immediate contribution to the most recent United Nations humanitarian response fund to alleviate the consequences of the critical humanitarian situation on the ground.

We in Ireland know from our own national history that violence serves only to exacerbate conflict. There can be no military solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Gaza or elsewhere. The tragic events of recent weeks remind us that only a vigorous political process can hope to achieve progress towards lasting peace and stability in the Middle East on the basis of a negotiated two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this context, Palestinian unity remains an essential goal, not only in order to reunite Gaza with the West Bank, but also to provide a solid and realistic basis for the efforts to achieve a final status agreement.

The Security Council and the broader international community have spoken in the clearest terms of the need for both sides to desist from further violence. Together with our partners in the European Union, we stand ready to assist the other members of the Quartet and the countries of the region as they seek to ensure the implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) towards that end. The terrible and continuing violence of the last three weeks makes this task a more difficult but even more critically urgent one.

Mr. Mourikis (Greece): Allow me to say at the outset that Greece fully aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

We have been deeply concerned, from the very beginning of the current crisis, by the tremendous humanitarian disaster inflicted on innocent Palestinian civilians, by the escalation of violence and by the tragic events that are posing an imminent danger to the stability of the whole region. We would like to express our deep and profound sorrow for the victims and to stress our belief that no solution can be found and no peace can be achieved as long as violence, atrocities and attacks on civilians persist.

We strongly believe that the international community should speak out about this crisis with one voice, condemning all acts of violence that result in the loss of innocent lives. We fully support Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), and we call on all sides to work immediately and constructively for its full implementation. We recall that no military solution can prevail in Gaza, nor can any security interests ever be safeguarded by violence and terror. The immediate ceasefire is the first step in this direction.

We believe that the peace process should be intensified. In this regard, we fully support the comprehensive process launched in Annapolis, the most recent initiative of Presidents Sarkozy and Mubarak and the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General. The international community should spare no effort to bring about a just, viable and long-overdue solution to this problem.

When faced with this tragic humanitarian situation in Gaza, we should do our utmost to assist the innocent civilian population. Greece has been among the very first countries to send humanitarian aid to the region, and we stand ready to contribute even further.

We believe that there must be an end to this vicious cycle of violence, which has tremendous costs in innocent human lives and risks destabilizing the whole region. We reiterate our strong condemnation of all acts of violence and terror and of those who support them. We also strongly condemn and deplore the targeting and bombing by the Israeli forces of civilian infrastructure, United Nations buildings and media facilities.

The diplomatic efforts should continue and should be intensified as the only means to bring about results in defusing the crisis and opening a window of hope for the future. The flow of humanitarian aid should reach the civilian population unimpeded. International humanitarian law should be respected by all, in all cases and under all circumstances. An immediate ceasefire is imperative.

We call upon all parties to comply with Security Council resolutions, show respect for human lives and pursue efforts so that peace and stability can finally come to the region.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): My country fully supports the statement made yesterday by the Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

As we already stated during the special session of the Human Rights Council on the situation in Gaza, Luxembourg is appalled by the intolerable loss of human life and the major humanitarian crisis affecting the civilian population in Gaza. The violence must stop, and it must stop now. As demanded by the Security Council in its resolution 1860 (2009), a lasting and fully respected ceasefire must be put in place immediately. The firing of rockets by Hamas

against Israel must stop without condition, and the Israeli military action must end.

The rules of international law and in particular those of international humanitarian law can no longer remain a dead letter. One party's failure to respect its obligations does not mean that the other party can do the same. All the parties to the conflict must strictly respect the principles of discrimination and proportionality and take all possible precautions to ensure maximum protection of the civilian population and civilian property, medical personnel, hospitals and health units.

The fact that installations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), humanitarian transport and shelters bearing the United Nations emblem have been targeted and bombed is quite simply unacceptable. Unimpeded access to and provision and distribution throughout Gaza of humanitarian aid, including food, fuel and medical treatment, must be guaranteed.

Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica), Vice-President, took the Chair.

It is clear that no winner can emerge from this confrontation. There can be no military solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, whether in Gaza or anywhere else. A lasting peace can only be the fruit of a political process leading to the establishment of a viable, independent and democratic Palestinian State, living side by side with Israel in peace and security, within secure and recognized borders.

Mr. De Klerk (Netherlands): The Netherlands associates itself with the statement made earlier during our debate by the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union and would like to make the following observations.

Deliberate Hamas rocket fire against Israeli civilians is an act of terrorism, and Israel has the right to defend itself in conformity with international law, which means, inter alia, that civilian casualties must be avoided.

The Netherlands wishes to add our voice to those who have called for an immediate and durable ceasefire. In this respect, the Netherlands would like to express its full support for Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). The Netherlands actively supports the diplomatic initiatives that can bring about an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire leading to the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and ending the launching of rockets towards Israel.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is of grave concern to us. The continuation of the conflict will only further increase the plight of the civilian populations. Yesterday's horrific shelling of the United Nations compound by Israeli military forces will harm the already difficult humanitarian aid relief efforts even further. The Netherlands Government has conveyed this message to the Government of Israel.

Furthermore, the Netherlands Government and the Netherlands parliament advocate an independent investigation into all cases in which a United Nations entity or internationally recognized relief organization, such as the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, questions whether the use of force by combatants is in conformity with the international legal norms applicable to this armed conflict.

The Netherlands wishes to underline the importance of finding mechanisms and guarantees that help prevent the recurrence of the events we are witnessing in and around Gaza. The Netherlands has expressed its keen interest to contribute to such efforts, in particular in the area of effective border monitoring aimed at halting arms smuggling.

Finally, the Netherlands supports the ongoing efforts, notably those of the Secretary-General, aimed at reaching a ceasefire.

Mr. Matussek (Germany): First of all, I would like to associate myself with the statement made by the Czech presidency of the European Union yesterday.

We are witnessing a dramatic humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. Germany deplores the high number of civilian casualties and the suffering of all civilians caused by the ongoing escalation of violence. We repeat our call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. Foreign Affairs Minister Steinmeier has just come back from his second visit to the region in a week. His efforts aim at supporting ongoing initiatives to reach a permanent and lasting ceasefire, a ceasefire that allows for immediate access for humanitarian aid and guarantees the security of both Israel and the Palestinian people.

There must be an unconditional halt to rocket attacks by Hamas on Israel and to the smuggling of weapons into the Gaza Strip, as well as to Israeli

military action. The cessation of fighting should allow for a lasting and normal opening of all border crossings, as provided for in the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access. The European Union has repeatedly stated its readiness to send its European Union Border Assistance Mission back to Rafah to enable its re-opening, in cooperation with Egypt, the Palestinian Authority and Israel. Germany remains willing to contribute to this crucial mission.

We warmly welcome the initiative presented by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, and we make every effort to support it, especially through German expertise in the field of border management. We welcome the talks in Cairo and hope that they will soon lead to a ceasefire and to the first concrete steps for permanent and lasting arrangements.

The alarming humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip calls for immediate action. Food, urgently needed medical supplies and fuel must be distributed to people in need. Safe evacuation of the injured must be allowed, and immediate access for humanitarian workers should be made possible through the opening of crossing points. Germany welcomes the daily temporary humanitarian ceasefires and calls on both sides to continue to respect them in order to allow for humanitarian access. Germany has stepped up its assistance to people in need by contributing €11 million to the humanitarian relief efforts.

The Israeli shelling of the United Nations compound in the Gaza Strip is unacceptable and represents a dangerous escalation. We demand that the facts of that incident be clarified.

Finally, let me stress that Germany sees an urgent need to step up the peace process. We are convinced that there is only a political solution to the current crisis. The solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be based on the process set out in Annapolis and on the establishment of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, existing side by side with Israel in peace and security. Work must be carried out, notably on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative, to deal with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a comprehensive and operational manner. We welcome and support the efforts of Egypt and the Arab League aimed at achieving inter-Palestinian reconciliation.

Mr. Dinesen (Denmark): Denmark fully aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

Denmark calls for an immediate, sustainable and durable ceasefire. It must include elements that provide the necessary security both for Israel and for the Palestinians. We commend the intense international efforts to secure a ceasefire, especially the Egyptian-led efforts and the efforts made by the Secretary-General in the region. Denmark reaffirms its full support for Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

Denmark fully acknowledges the right of Israel to defend itself against rockets and terrorist attacks. Under the United Nations Charter, Israel has the right to self-defence. Such self-defence must be carried out within the limits laid out by — and in compliance with — humanitarian law. Special caution must be taken with regard to civilians, and civilian casualties must be avoided.

By initiating the conflict with a cynical and condemnable barrage of rockets from civilian neighbourhoods in Gaza into civilian neighbourhoods in Israel, Hamas has brought enormous suffering and pain to the Palestinian people in Gaza.

Denmark is deeply concerned about the civilian suffering in Gaza and protests the incidents in which humanitarian aid, health facilities and schools have been hit, including the latest incident in which a compound of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was attacked. It is of the utmost importance that Israel do everything possible to improve the humanitarian situation and to ensure unhindered access for and the distribution of aid.

Our main priority now should be to secure and support an immediate ceasefire, leading to an Israeli withdrawal, and to improve the humanitarian situation. However, we should also think about the challenges ahead: reconstruction in Gaza, opening borders, preventing arms smuggling and an even greater effort to get the peace process back on track with a view to achieving the necessary two-State solution.

Mr. Hadjimichael (Cyprus): Cyprus fully aligns itself with the statement delivered yesterday by the presidency of the European Union.

Like so many other Member States here, Cyprus too is gravely concerned both about the situation itself

and about the lack of respect for and implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). We regret to empirically confirm yet again the shortcomings of our system of collective security.

We condemn the absence of a ceasefire, the excessive and disproportionate use of force by Israel, all acts of violence, the unjustifiable number of civilian casualties and the dire humanitarian situation in which Gaza continues to find itself. We strongly condemn Israel's shelling of the United Nations headquarters in Gaza yesterday and the attacks against schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East last week. We stress the paramount importance of respecting international law, in particular international humanitarian law, and we call for an impartial inquiry into allegations of violations of international law.

We affirm the right of all civilians to live in safety and security. We welcome the periodic opening of humanitarian corridors, but we have witnessed on the ground the inadequacy of that measure in ensuring the provision of the necessary humanitarian assistance and relief.

We urge the withdrawal of all Israeli forces from Gaza, reiterate that Gaza will be an integral part of the Palestinian State and express the hope that the peace process will be revived despite the damage that it will undoubtedly sustain through the ongoing military operation.

Lastly, we support the ongoing efforts of the Secretary-General to ensure the implementation of resolution 1860 (2009) by all parties and to bring about an immediate ceasefire, as well as other efforts to that end, such as the Egyptian and French initiatives.

Mr. Seruhere (United Republic of Tanzania): We thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting and express our support for his statement and that of the Deputy Secretary-General, made yesterday. We align ourselves with the statement read out by the representative of Rwanda on behalf of the African Group.

The Government of the United Republic of Tanzania is deeply concerned about the crisis in Gaza, which threatens the peace and security of the entire region. For the past three weeks, we have been witnessing the unprecedented suffering of civilians, particularly women and children, who have been caught up in the conflict. The humanitarian situation in Gaza is a cause for concern. It is thus important that the international community act in unity and swiftly to de-escalate the crisis and ease the suffering of the people of Gaza.

The Government of Tanzania thus calls for an immediate ceasefire and the cessation of all hostilities between the two parties, to allow a negotiated solution to be found that will end the conflict and to allow for the flow of humanitarian assistance. The United Republic of Tanzania supports the two-State solution: Palestine and Israel living side by side in peace and security. We believe that the United Nations, through the Security Council, has a central role to play in ending this conflict. We support the work of the Council and urge that an appropriate consensus on the way forward be reached immediately. We also join preceding speakers in welcoming Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

Resolving the Palestinian question is essential to the achievement of a durable peace in the Middle East. The time for the United Nations and the international community to act on the crisis in Gaza and to find a solution to the Palestinian question is now, not tomorrow. It is as imperative as it is doable.

Ms. Graham (New Zealand): New Zealand is gravely concerned by the escalating humanitarian crisis in Gaza. We strongly support Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and its call for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire. The ever-increasing death and injury toll of Palestinian and Israeli civilians is deeply disturbing. Hamas must immediately end its rocket attacks on Israel, and Israel must immediately end its military offensive and withdraw its forces from Gaza.

New Zealand condemns the appalling attacks on United Nations personnel and facilities in Gaza. We are a long-standing supporter of the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and we are deeply disturbed by the recent strike on its headquarters.

At a time when the humanitarian needs in Gaza are so overwhelming, the attacks against those attempting to alleviate the suffering are especially distressing. It is incumbent on both sides to allow the unimpeded provision and distribution of humanitarian assistance.

There are allegations of serious violations of international humanitarian law in this conflict. We support the Secretary-General's call for an impartial inquiry into those allegations.

Finally, New Zealand adds its voice to the call for an urgent cessation of hostilities, as demanded in Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). We urge Israel and Hamas to renounce violence and to make credible and decisive advances towards an enduring and fully respected peace. We strongly support the current efforts under way to achieve that goal.

Mr. Örnéus (Sweden): At the outset, Sweden fully aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union. We would like to make some additional comments in our national capacity. In order to save time, I will be brief.

Sweden welcomes the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and calls for its full and immediate implementation. We strongly support the ongoing regional and international efforts to find a rapid solution to the crisis in accordance with resolution 1860 (2009), including the efforts of the Secretary-General. In that context, we would also like to stress the need to reactivate the peace process and to encourage inter-Palestinian reconciliation.

Sweden expresses its grave concern at the deepening humanitarian crisis. The civilian population is being subjected to untold suffering. We are particularly concerned about the situation of children, who constitute almost 60 per cent of the population in Gaza.

Sweden condemns the Israeli attack on the headquarters building of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Gaza yesterday. It is unacceptable that UNRWA, the major United Nations actor in Gaza at the moment, was attacked. International humanitarian law clearly states that humanitarian and medical personnel must be protected at all times. As a result of the attack, UNRWA's ability to operate — including its ability to distribute much-needed food, medicine and fuel — has now been severely affected.

Sweden strongly emphasizes that all civilians, as well as wounded and sick persons, medical personnel and medical buildings, must be protected, in accordance with international humanitarian law. Sweden urges all parties to the conflict to comply with international humanitarian law.

Mr. Grauls (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Belgium is extremely concerned at the unprecedented escalation of violence in Gaza and southern Israel. It poses a serious threat to regional stability, has already caused hundreds of deaths and is accompanied by a grave humanitarian crisis linked to a situation caused mainly by the blockade of Gaza in recent months.

As I have taken the floor at the end of a long meeting, I shall confine myself to five points.

First, Belgium fully supports the statement made by the Czech presidency of the European Union.

Secondly, Belgium strongly condemns the escalation of violence that we are now witnessing.

Thirdly, the situation on the ground is obviously contrary to international humanitarian law. The reports of attacks against humanitarian workers, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and hospitals are deeply shocking. Belgium strongly condemns all violations of the rules of war and believes that this should be the subject of an independent inquiry.

Fourthly, Belgium urgently calls for an immediate and durable ceasefire, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), which should be fully implemented forthwith. Both parties must unconditionally cease all military activities and permit access to all victims and the resumption of humanitarian activities in safety, in the interest of the civilian population, for which they are responsible. The pursuit of violence is contrary to the interests of the parties and violates the basic principles of international law.

Fifthly, Belgium supports the ongoing diplomatic efforts, particularly those undertaken by the Secretary-General, to achieve a ceasefire. Given the gravity of the situation, Belgium evacuated six seriously wounded children from the Gaza Strip on 14 January, using military aircraft. These are children between 2 and 18 years old, each of whom was accompanied by a member of his or her immediate family. They have since been admitted to Belgian hospitals. Belgium remains ready and willing to evacuate and host other wounded children, depending on the requests made by humanitarian organizations and the circumstances on the ground.

Mr. Borg (Malta): Malta supports the statement delivered by the representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

During the past two days, this resumed emergency special session of the General Assembly has repeatedly heard the urgent appeals of all Member States for an immediate ceasefire and cessation of hostilities and for the opening of all border crossings to allow much-needed humanitarian aid to reach the beleaguered population in the Gaza Strip, as well as appeals for renewed effort in the search for a long-lasting solution to the conflict in the Middle East, which has the Palestinian question at its core. Malta joins in those appeals.

The human tragedy and the humanitarian crisis that have prevailed in and around the Gaza Strip over the past few weeks can no longer be condoned. The cries of the civilian population in the region require an immediate response from all of us in order to alleviate the constant suffering and anguish being experienced by those innocent victims.

As many of the interventions in the Assembly have highlighted, violence, rocket attacks and military operations will not lead us anywhere except to considerable loss of life, devastation and destruction, in addition to the lifelong trauma of men, women and, especially, children living in Palestine and Israel. For that beleaguered population, the deprivation that a conflict brings to their daily lives, the fear of being killed or wounded, whether within the shelter of their homes or in United Nations schools or compounds, and their vulnerability to the destructive machinery of war severely test their ability to survive a cruel conflict that has resulted in many deaths and thousands of wounded. Malta continues to consistently condemn the rocket attacks from Gaza on Israeli towns and citizens. At the same time, any reaction clearly cannot exceed the limits of what is acceptable in achieving one's aim.

Malta, true to its commitment to join other Member States in taking effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace, wholeheartedly supports the efforts currently being undertaken by the Secretary-General and the President of Egypt to seek an immediate halt to the hostilities in the Gaza Strip. Malta wishes to take this opportunity to salute the heroic and unstinting role of the United Nations staff in Gaza, in particular those of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and the personnel of other international organizations who are risking their lives in their efforts to help improve the plight of the population in Gaza.

The provisions of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) must be fully respected and implemented. In this respect, Malta feels that the situation on the ground requires that commitments made by all concerned be appropriately adhered to through an international monitoring mechanism. Malta also believes that the Middle East peace process, based on the Arab Peace Initiative and the agreements reached at the November 2007 Annapolis conference for a two-State solution, must once again be resumed and pursued vigorously.

Malta also continues to strongly believe that a resolution of the Middle East conflict can be achieved only through peaceful dialogue in which the ultimate and principal goal is the creation of a Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in peace and security.

Ms. Ziade (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express our thanks to the President for reconvening this tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly. I would also like to express our full support for the statements delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

In the words of my President, General Michel Sleiman, our meeting today has been preceded by the shedding of innocent blood, the screams of torn bodies and the thick smoke over the dear land of Gaza. This situation places upon us a major responsibility that must match the enormity of the Israeli aggression.

We meet today in the context of efforts undertaken to put an end to this aggression and to provide support for the brotherly people of Palestine. It is a great responsibility that the General Assembly assumes when it becomes a rostrum of justice and of what is right, the guardian of the provisions of international law and the sponsor of a resolution that garners the widest support. We have worked and continue to work to obtain the widest possible support for the draft resolution (A/ES-10/L.21). We want the resolution to have the necessary effectiveness, which does not mean that we are prepared to barter away the fundamental rights and principles enshrined in

international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

We have welcomed the content of the draft resolution tabled by the President of the General Assembly calling for an immediate ceasefire and the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, facilitating entry for and distribution of humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip and the mobilization of efforts by the international community to ease the humanitarian and economic crisis pervading in Gaza.

In its solidarity with the brotherly Palestinian people, Lebanon has not and will not spare any efforts to help it to confront the injustice that has befallen it and to regain all of its legitimate rights. The Lebanese Government has taken the decision to provide assistance in the amount of $1 million. Furthermore, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriate Affairs in Lebanon, Mr. Fawzi Salloukh, contributed to the efforts made by the Arab ministerial delegation to the Security Council when resolution 1860 (2009) was adopted, calling for an immediate and durable ceasefire, the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip and the alleviation of the humanitarian catastrophe in the Strip.

As always, Israel responded with intransigence, by defying international legitimacy and the resolutions of the United Nations. Its Prime Minister stated that Israel is not concerned, and it continued its aggression against the Gaza Strip and its people.

How similar is this Palestinian suffering to the suffering of the Lebanese as a result of repeated Israeli attacks, the latest in July 2006! That was an aggression that the Lebanese faced, unified in their commitment to the resolutions of international legitimacy, first and foremost of which is Security Council resolution 1701 (2006). As soon as that resolution was adopted, Lebanon declared its full commitment to all its provisions, while Israel continues to refuse to abide by many of them.

The bloody events in Gaza have shown that the root of the problem lies in the continuing Israeli occupation, in its practices that contravene international law, in Israel's intransigence and in its rejection of the peace process based on the Arab Peace Initiative adopted by Arab leaders at the Beirut summit in 2002 and which has been reaffirmed at every successive summit, in addition to the principles of the Madrid conference and all relevant international resolutions, the latest being resolution 1860 (2009).

Has the time not come to mobilize international efforts to stop the cycle of violence, to deter Israel in its criminal practices and its violation of international law? Has the time not come to compel Israel to heed the Arab and international calls for peace?

Some hours ago, Lebanon welcomed His Excellency the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, in his visit to the region bearing a message of peace. Lebanon has welcomed him as a representative of international legitimacy. He is making welcome efforts to find solutions to various crises in the world, especially the Middle East, which has been the scene of one of the oldest and most lethal conflicts against humanity and the principles of international law.

Lebanon has reaffirmed its commitment to international legitimacy and all resolutions of the United Nations as a means to resolve conflicts, and we have reaffirmed the importance of all of the initiatives being made to bring about an immediate ceasefire and an end to this grave humanitarian catastrophe. In Lebanon, we look to the United Nations to fulfil the obligations entrusted to it under its Charter.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Holy See.

Archbishop Migliore (Holy See): At the very outset, my delegation would like to express its solidarity with the civilians in Gaza and some Israeli cities who bear the brunt of a cruel conflict.

My delegation takes this opportunity to wish the Secretary-General well in his mission to step up the pace of the joint diplomatic efforts and ensure that urgent humanitarian assistance reaches those in need.

The Holy See asks that Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) of 8 January, which calls for an immediate and durable ceasefire and for unimpeded humanitarian assistance, be implemented fully. In the past few days, we have witnessed the practical failure on the part of all sides to respect the distinction between civilian and military targets. In the context of this resolution, we call on all parties to fully abide by the requirements of international humanitarian law in order to ensure the protection of civilians.

The troubled history of some sixty years of coexistence of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples has

witnessed a long succession of conflict, but also of dialogue, including the Madrid meetings, the Oslo Accords, the Wye River Memorandum, the peace process of the Quartet, the Road Map and the Annapolis Conference, with their two-State solution. Unfortunately, however, the many efforts to establish peace between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples have so far failed.

My delegation observes that so many failed efforts are due to insufficiently courageous and coherent political will for establishing peace, from every side, and ultimately an unwillingness to come together and forge a just and lasting peace.

The United Nations has the weighty task of getting the parties to respect the ceasefire, pave the way to negotiations and agreements between them and ensure humanitarian assistance. In particular, the General Assembly can assist the parties in conflict to discover new patterns for establishing peace, patterns based on mutual acceptance and cooperation amid diversity.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker for this meeting. We will suspend the meeting briefly so that the President may return and resume the Chair.

The meeting was suspended at 5.35 p.m. and resumed at 5.55 p.m. with the President in the Chair.

The President: Dear brothers and sisters, I know that we were all striving to take action on the draft resolution no later than 6 o'clock. I thank all members for endeavouring to make sure that we had finished with the speeches in time.

Our European brother from the Czech Republic has requested more time because the European Union is supposedly still negotiating about something. So, if that is amenable to members, I ask that at 6.30 p.m. sharp, which is in a half an hour, we will come back. In the mean time, the meeting is adjourned. Please be back, and do not leave. Be back at 6.30 p.m. sharp.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.